Historic Sketch of Southern Methodism in Washington, D. C.

Proposed Representative Church Edifice

RESOLUTIONS

OF THE

QUARTERLY CONFERENCE

OF

MOUNT VERNON PLACE CHURCH

ON PROPOSED

REPRESENTATIVE CHURCH EDIFICE

AND

HISTORIC SKETCH

OF

SOUTHERN METHODISM IN WASHINGTON, D. C.

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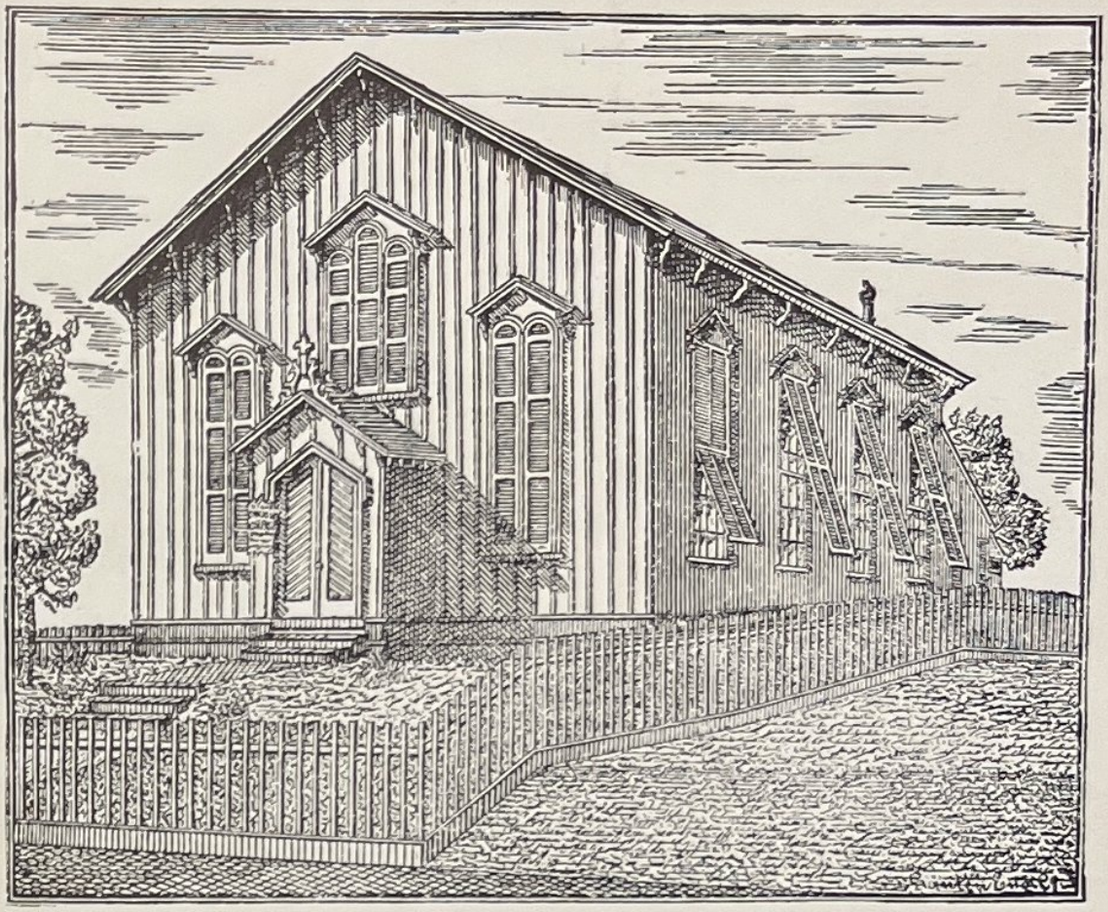
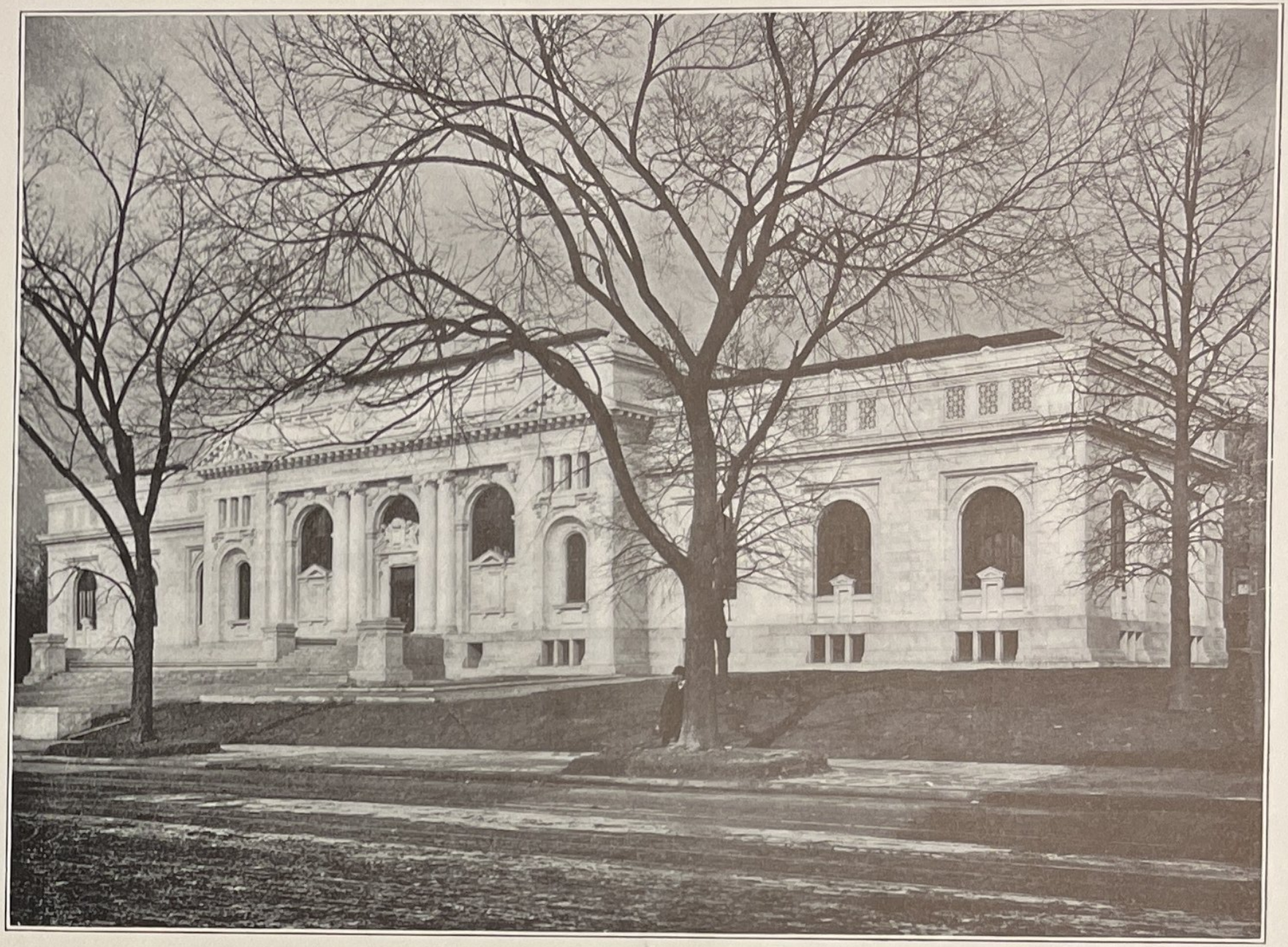


I. M STREET M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH, 1863-1868

Public Library District of Columbia, 1905.



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Resolutions of the Quarterly Conference.

At a regular session of the Quarterly Conference of Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Washington, D. C., held September 21, 1905—John S. Hutchinson, Presiding Elder, in the chair.

Under the call of the thirty-first question the following preamble and resolutions were offered and unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, with the increasing progress and development of the United States in matters of civil and political interest, the city of Washington, the seat of our National Government, has come to be a center of commanding and strategic importance for the declaration and justification of the doctrines and mission of the Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS we believe it to be the high privilege and duty of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to seize the opportunity now afforded to command the position to which by right she is entitled, and thus strengthen her power and influence at the National Capital so that she may do her full share in the work of more securely building up the Church and more permanently establishing the principles of Christian civilization; and

WHEREAS, to accomplish this end, we believe it to be essential that there be erected in this city as soon as possible a commodious and well appointed church building of imposing architectural design, such as will appropriately represent our great denomination at the National Capital; and

WHEREAS the erection of such a church building cannot be accomplished unless there shall be provided a means for raising, in greater part, the necessary funds from our membership at large; and

WHEREAS we believe the present to be the opportune time to take such preliminary steps in the premises as will prepare the way for definite action in the near future; be it therefore

Resolved, That a committee of seven members of this Quarterly Conference be appointed by the Presiding Elder, whose duties shall be:

1. To prepare a brief history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Washington city, in which shall be set forth the work which has been accomplished, the obstacles which have been met and overcome, and the present pressing need of the erection here of a representative church building of the character above indicated.

2. To devise and suggest appropriate means whereby to present the whole matter to the Baltimore Conference, at its next annual meeting, and to have that body indorse the movement, if in its judgment deemed wise and proper, and, in the event of such indorsement, to adopt a suitable memorial setting forth the facts and needs of the situation, to be presented to the General Conference at its next session, asking that provision be made by law for raising from the Church at large a sufficient amount of money to insure the success of the enterprise.

3. Said committee shall make report to the next meeting of this Conference for its consideration and further action.

The committee called for was appointed as follows:

Wm. French Locke, Wm. L. Chambers,
Arthur B. Pugh, J. Everett Baird,
Frederick A. Stier, John M. Follin,
David L. Coon.

At a special session of the Quarterly Conference of Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Washington, D. C., held March 13, 1906—John S. Hutchinson, Presiding Elder, in the chair.

Under the call of the thirty-first question the following business was transacted:

The committee appointed under the resolutions of September 21, 1905, submitted their report as follows:

III. MOUNT VERNON PLACE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH

To the Quarterly Conference of Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Washington, D. C.:

Your committee appointed under the preamble and resolutions of September 21, 1905, respectfully submit the following report:

I.

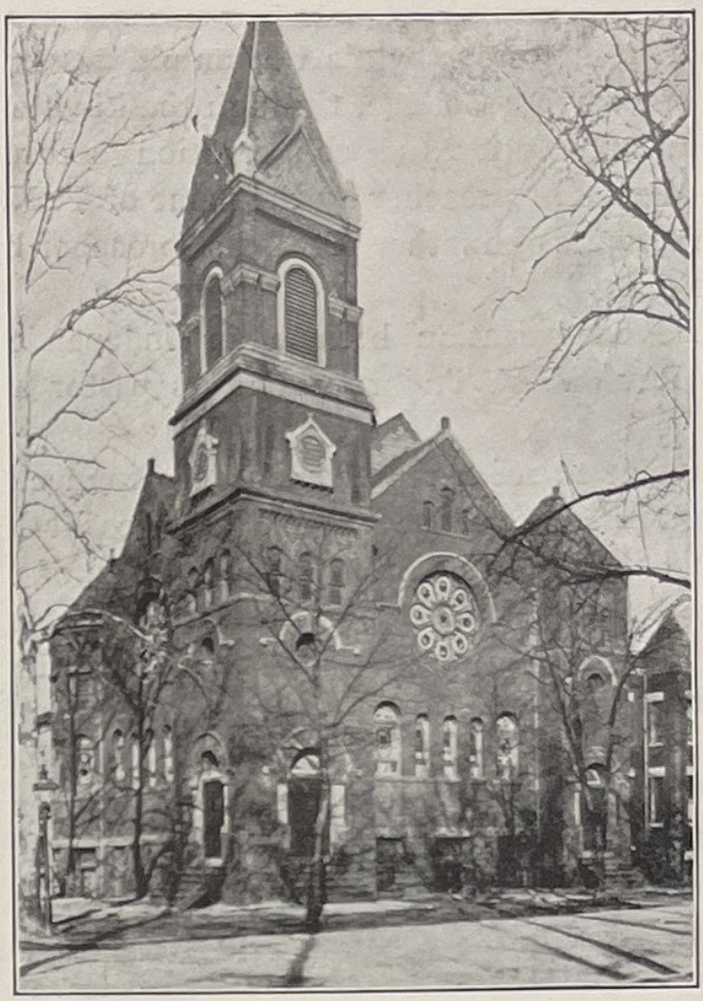
HISTORIC SKETCH.

Southern Methodism in Washington city was organized in 1850. The first congregation was established on 8th street between H and I streets N. W., and was connected with the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The congregation was served by ministers regularly appointed by the Conference from that time to 1861 as follows:

1850–1851—W. W. Bennett.
1851–1852—Leonidas Rosser.
1852–1853—John D. Blackwell.
1853–1855—James A. Duncan.
1855–1857—David S. Doggett.
1857–1859—John C. Granbery.
1859–1861—Joseph A. Proctor.

For the year 1861–1862 George H. Ray was appointed, but by reason of the breaking out of the civil war was unable to fill the appointment. During that year, however, the congregation was served in the pulpit by Rev. C. A. Davis, who occupied a supernumerary relation to the Conference. For the years 1862, 1863, 1864, and 1865 no appointments to Washington city were made by the Virginia Conference.

In 1862 the congregation erected, and for a time occupied as a place of worship, a small frame building on P street between 14th and 15th streets N. W. The clouds of the great war had overcast the horizon, and the feeling in Washington against those identified with the Southern wing of the church was intensely bitter. The little band suffered the greatest persecutions, but succeeded in holding themselves together by the tie of a true Methodist spirit, and, undaunted in their purpose to secure a pure gospel unmixed with politics, they obtained the services in the pulpit of a local preacher, Rev. John Wesley Boteler, a noble and godly man, who in after



IV. EPWORTH M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH, SEVENTH AND A STREETS N. E.

years, when Mount Vernon Place Church became an established institution and began the work of planting missions in other parts of the city, went out as the leader of a mission in East Washington, where, by his efficient efforts and untiring energy, he succeeded in erecting a church—now Epworth M. E. Church, South—which is a monument to his memory and a pride to the Mother Church.

In 1863 the congregation erected a frame building on M street near 9th N. W., represented by plate I herewith, and at once moved into the new church. For a while the pulpit was supplied by professors from Columbian College, through the kindness of its president, Dr. Samson. Later the congregation secured the pulpit services of a Methodist preacher by the name of T. N. Conrad, and still later the services of another Methodist preacher by the name of D. W. Parrish.

In 1865 the congregation became an Independent Methodist Church, and Rev. W. V. Tudor became its pastor and served for one year.

In 1866 the church reëntered the southern connection by joining the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at the session held in Alexandria, Va., in March of that year, and Dr. Tudor was continued as pastor. During his pastorate the present "Mount Vernon Place Church" was erected, and the congregation moved into it in June, 1869. The name was chosen by Dr. Tudor himself. He conceived the idea that, as Mount Vernon was the home of the Father of his Country, there could be no objection to the name for the church, especially as the street and park immediately in front of the church were then known as "Mount Vernon Place." The park is now the site of Carnegie Library, represented by plate II herewith. The church as it stands today is shown by plate III.

While worshiping at the M Street building the congregation grew from thirty to two hundred members. The present membership is between eight hundred and fifty and nine hundred.

The pastors who have served Mount Vernon Place Church since Dr. Tudor's time are as follows:

1871–1873—S. S. Roszell, D. D.

Assistants { First year, John Hannon. / Second year, John A. Kern.

1873–1877—A. W. Wilson, D. D.

1875—E. E. Hoss, } Supplies.
1878—I. R. Finley, }

V. MARVIN M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH, TENTH AND B STREETS S. W.

1878–1882—W. P. Harrison, D. D.
1882–1886—S. K. Cox, D. D.
1886–1890—S. W. Haddaway.
1890–1893—J. T. Wightman, D. D.
1893–1897—I. W. Canter.
1897–1901—J. W. Duffey, D. D.
1901–1905—Forrest J. Prettyman.
1905—Wm. F. Locke.

The strong feelings engendered by the civil war caused many obstacles to be placed in the way of the church's advancement for a number of years. At times these obstacles seemed almost insurmountable. Many persons in the Government departments and in business life generally became fearful of the loss of their official positions or of their business if they were known to affiliate with the "Rebel Church," as the congregation was then called. The persecutions were severe and unrelenting, and at times were accompanied by dire threats against pastor and people by those in authority, both civil and military. These conditions continued up to and included the pastorate of Rev. A. W. Wilson, D. D. (now our senior Bishop), but in spite of them the church grew in numbers and increased in strength.

Too much cannot be said in praise of the work done by the brave, noble, and godly pastors in those troublous years. To them, each and all, and to the noble band of Christian people who courageously withstood the persecutions of the times and held fast the faith of their fathers Southern Methodism owes a debt of everlasting gratitude. That their work and its results were an inspiration to those who came after them is shown by the progress which the church has since made. Missions have been established in every part of the city where the interest of Southern Methodism needed to be conserved, and several of these missions have grown into self-sustaining churches.

During the pastorate of Rev. S. K. Cox, D. D. (1882–1886), Grace Mission, now Epworth Church, was established in East Washington, under the leadership of Rev. John Wesley Boteler, now of sainted memory. This church has a membership of about four hundred, and has done and is doing a splendid work. See plate IV.

During the pastorate of Rev. S. W. Haddaway (1886–1890) a mission was established in South Washington, which soon developed

VI. ST. PAUL'S M E. CHURCH, SOUTH, 2D AND S STREETS N. W.

into a self-sustaining church at that point, now known as "Marvin," with a membership of about two hundred and thirty. See plate V.

During the pastorate of Rev. I. W. Canter (1893–1897) a mission was established in West Washington (Georgetown), which, after several years of struggle, now, with a membership of about 150, gives bright promise of a great work in the near future, provided the necessary financial aid can be supplied. Under Mr. Canter's pastorate a mission was also established at Del Ray, Virginia, September 11, 1894, and weekly religious services were thereafter conducted by local preachers and laymen from Mount Vernon Church. The membership, though at first small, consisted of devoted earnest Christians, loyal to Southern Methodism. A church was immediately enterprised, and was completed and occupied on Christmas day of that year. The congregation grew and flourished under the smile and encouragement of the mother church, and later was transferred to the care of the church at Alexandria, Virginia.

In March, 1903, the Washington City Church Extension Society was organized, and all the churches were thereby brought into more intimate relations, resulting in a decided forward movement in missionary work. Through the efforts of this Society two lots in North Washington were purchased, costing $5,000, and donated to a newly organized society of Southern Methodists in that part of the city. A new church was at once erected on one of the lots, the other being reserved for a larger building in the future. Work was commenced in December, 1904, and in May, 1905, the church was completed and dedicated. It has a membership of about one hundred and fifty, seventy of whom were contributed by the mother (Mount Vernon) church. The membership is well organized and is rapidly moving forward. See plate VI, St. Paul.

The launching and establishing of these enterprises caused a heavy drain upon the parent church, in both membership and money; but her policy has been to conserve the interests of Southern Methodism in the city generally, rather than to concentrate her efforts and means toward the building of a great central church. Thus she has wrought in the interest of the church at large, and by reason of the consequent drain upon her resources has not been and is not now able to provide the kind of church edifice which is needed and required suitably to represent the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at the National Capital.

VII. METROPOLITAN M. E. CHURCH, FOUR-AND-A-HALF AND C STREETS N. W.

VIII. FOUNDRY M. E. CHURCH, SIXTEENTH STREET N. W.

IX. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, EIGHTH AND H STREETS N. W.

The City Church Extension Society was compelled to borrow the greater part of the $5,000 paid for the two lots in North Washington, which were donated to Saint Paul Church, and it is now raising the funds to liquidate the obligation thus created. We are informed that as soon as this debt is provided for the purpose of the Society is to aid the enterprise in West Washington, and this will impose upon it all the burden it will be able to assume for some time to come.

It is the judgment of your committee that there is now open to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in this city a greater and more promising field for successful evangelistic effort and for material advancement than ever before. The bitterness engendered by the civil war has passed away, and the church no longer has to contend with the obstacles which confronted it for so many years. The conditions are most favorable to a forward movement along all lines of religious activity. The demand for a pure and simple gospel, long distinctly noticeable, is rapidly increasing. We believe the opportunity is great, but to take advantage of and improve it, it is essential that better church facilities be secured.

That Southern Methodism needs at the National Capital a spacious representative church edifice of attractive architectural design, with up-to-date facilities and appliances, such as will compare favorably with the representative churches which other denominations have provided, no one can doubt or question. Nor is there any doubt that the need is urgent and pressing.

The erection of such a church edifice cannot be accomplished by the local membership. It has been only by persistent efforts, under most trying circumstances, that the interests of the denomination throughout the city have been conserved, and in carrying on this work our resources have been taxed to their utmost.

If, therefore, Southern Methodism is to have a representative church edifice, such as will meet the demands of the situation, the funds to erect the same will have to be contributed, in greater part, by the membership at large. This, we believe, should be done, not only because the church at large would be immeasurably benefited thereby, but also for the reason that it would be no more than other denominations have done, and with consequent great and lasting benefit to themselves.

The representative churches of some of the other denominations, with the cost of the same and how contributed, are here given.

X. GRACE REFORMED CHURCH, FIFTEENTH STREET N. W.

Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church (see plate VII).—This is one of the handsomest churches in the city. It was built directly after the war, almost entirely from outside capital. Its estimated value is $300,000, though its original cost, we understand, was a little less than that amount.

Foundry Methodist Episcopal Church (see plate VIII).—This beautiful new church, situated on Sixteenth street N. W., completed and dedicated in April, 1904, cost $215,000. The funds were obtained from the sale of the old Foundry Church, long situated at the corner of Fourteenth and G streets N. W., at the price of $200,000, and from the sale of another church property at the price of $15,000. The old Foundry Church property was originally donated by Henry Foxall, a wealthy Methodist of Georgetown, and a later large donation to the church was made by his grandson. The church as it stands today is therefore largely the result of the donations originally made by two men.

Calvary Baptist Church (see plate IX).—This is the representative church of the Baptist denomination. The original plant was mainly due to the contributions of one man. A large Sunday School House has been erected and the church greatly improved in recent years, at a cost of $150,000, one-half of which was contributed by one wealthy member, and the other half by the congregation. The present estimated value of the plant is $300,000.

Grace Reformed Church (see plate X).—This is where President Roosevelt worships. The church is situated on Fifteenth street, and was recently built at a cost of $47,000, six-sevenths of which was contributed by the church at large outside of Washington, and the remaining one-seventh by the local congregation.

United Brethren Memorial Church (see plate XI).—This was recently built as the representative church of the denomination. The cost was $45,000, a large part of which was contributed by the General Church Extension Board.

Church of the Covenant (see plate XII).—This principal representative church of the Presbyterian denomination is situated on Connecticut avenue, in the northwest part of the city. It was erected about fifteen years ago and cost in the aggregate $215,000, partly contributed by Presbyterians outside of Washington, but to what extent we have been unable to ascertain.

XI. UNITED BRETHREN MEMORIAL CHURCH, NORTH CAPITOL AND R STREETS

Eastern Presbyterian Church (see plate XIII).—This beautiful church is situated in East Washington and was recently erected at a total cost of $100,000, mostly contributed by the local congregation.

It is a well-known fact that the Presbyterians, not content with the spacious and attractive churches they already have, are about to launch an enterprise which will have for its object the erection in this city of a great representative church edifice or cathedral, to cost not less than one million dollars, the whole amount to be raised from the church at large.

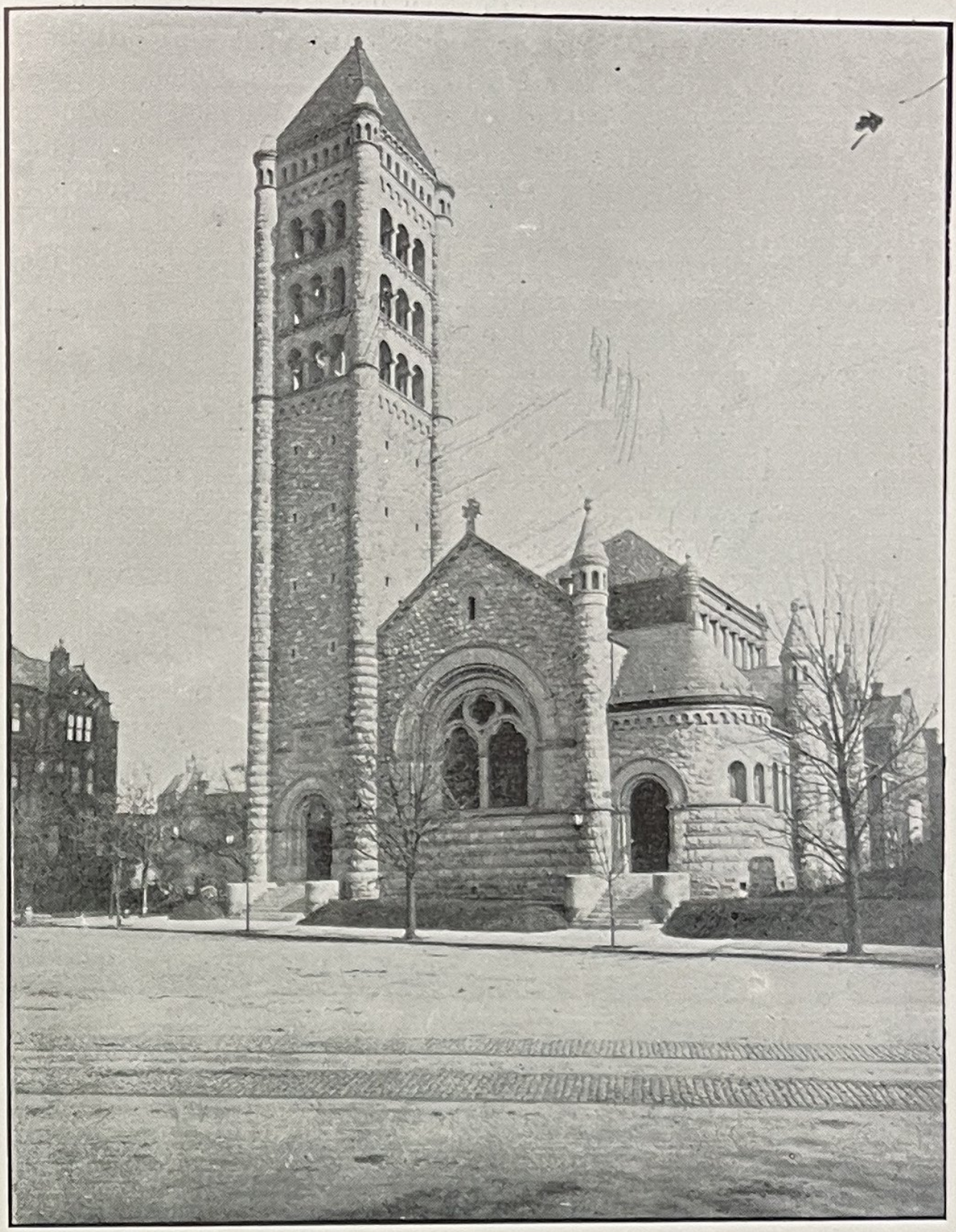
Luther Place Memorial Church (see plate XIV).—This handsome church edifice, located on Thomas Circle at the junction of Fourteenth street and Vermont and Massachusetts avenues, was erected about thirty years ago, at a time when property in that section of the city and building materials and labor were cheap. The cost of the church was $100,000, contributed very largely by people outside of Washington, and with the lot included is now valued at $125,000.

Church of the Ascension (see plate XV).—This representative church of the Episcopal denomination is situated at the corner of Massachusetts avenue and Twelfth street northwest, and was erected at a cost of $125,000, contributed in greater part by a wealthy member of that church.

In this connection we refer also to the Cathedral now already begun, and which, together with the appurtenant buildings and schools, one each for boys and girls, athletic halls, etc., will constitute a group which it is estimated will cost $1,500,000—the finest of its character in America. Of this vast amount we are informed the sum of $900,000 has already been subscribed, and that it is expected the remainder will be secured from the same sources, namely, the Episcopalians of the whole country.

Vermont Avenue Christian Church (see plate XVI).—This representative church of the Christian denomination originally cost about $50,000, nearly all of which was raised outside of Washington, through the General Missionary Board of the church. Property now valued at $75,000.

Thus supplied, as other denominations are shown to be, with attractive and, in most cases, thoroughly modern representative



XII. CHURCH OF THE COVENANT (PRESBYTERIAN), N STREET AND CONNECTICUT AVENUE N. W.

churches, it needs no argument to prove that Southern Methodism cannot successfully compete with them under present conditions. Her principal church is not only unattractive, but unsightly in appearance, and the accommodations and facilities are by no means adequate to the needs of the young people and children of the congregation, even with the present Sunday School, which numbers about five hundred. With a commodious and attractive church building, with modern facilities and appliances, we believe that by reasonable and proper effort in that direction the Sunday School could soon be increased to a membership of more than a thousand.

The importance to Southern Methodism of a spacious representative church edifice at the National Capital was a matter of deep concern to many wise and far-seeing men of the Church in its early history. A memorial on the subject, signed by W. W. Bennett and J. C. Granbery, of the Virginia Conference, and by eleven members of the Church in Washington city, of which Mr. Bennett was the first pastor, and of which Mr. Granbery was then pastor, was presented to the General Conference which met in May, 1858, at Nashville, Tenn. From the minutes of that Conference it appears that on motion of David S. Doggett, one of the predecessors of Mr. Granbery as pastor of the Church in Washington, the memorial was referred to a committee, of which W. W. Bennett was chairman. From the report of that committee, which, on motion of D. S. Doggett and A. Hunter, was adopted by the Conference, we quote the following extracts:

The committee to whom was referred the memorial of the Quarterly Conference of Washington City Station, Virginia Conference, having had the same under consideration, beg leave to present the following:

The interest in behalf of which your memorialists plead is one of the greatest importance to the Southern Church, and to the cause of true religion in the metropolis of the nation. This point needs no elaboration. Every member of this body must feel that so great and influential a denomination as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, should be represented by a large and flourishing society at the seat of the General Government.

Then, after referring to the brave and manly manner in which the little band of Southern Methodists in Washington city had been stemming the tide of opposition, the report proceeds:

While these brethren are fully able to sustain themselves in their present place of worship as a station of the Virginia Conference, they

XIII. EASTERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SIXTH STREET AND MARYLAND AVENUE N. E.

feel persuaded that our cause there would be greatly promoted by having a more spacious edifice in a more eligible situation. We cannot do better than to repeat the language of your memorialists on this particnlar point: "We ought to have a more spacious building and a more convenient location. We need a larger and better situated building, not, we repeat, for ourselves, but for the accommodation of the Southern Methodists, who are here in crowds all the year or the months during the session of Congress. With such an advantage, we are confident that we could enlarge the sphere of our operations to the material advancement of the sacred cause which we all hold so dear."

Your committee would also call the attention of the General Conference to the fact that all the leading denominations of the country are taking measures for the establishment of large and influential churches in the national metropolis. The Protestant Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Northern Methodists have been making most strenuous efforts to increase their numbers and influence in the Federal city. All these churches, with the exception, perhaps, of the Episcopal, have sent their agents far and wide through the North and South, soliciting funds for the purpose of building large and commodious houses of worship. Why should we be behind all other denominations in this respect?

The report provided a means for carrying into effect the suggestions of the committee, but the great war which so soon followed completely blocked the undertaking, and, so far as your committee is informed, the matter has thus rested until the present. What other denominations have done in the meantime and the still larger enterprises which some of them now have in contemplation we have herein set out.

It is so well known by every observant person what the Catholics are doing at the National Capital that it is hardly necessary to more than mention the subject to stimulate Protestant zeal and work along the same lines. In every department—social, educational, eleemosynary, and religious—this powerful Christian institution from its throne across the seas is stretching out its gathering hands into every community of the United States where there is a Roman Catholic constituency for the millions of dollars which the Church is spending in the District of Columbia upon its schools, colleges, universities; upon its missions, parish churches, and cathedral.

XIV. LUTHER PLACE MEMORIAL CHURCH, FOURTEENTH STREET AND VERMONT AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUES

II.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Your committee suggest and recommend that this report, including the views or cuts referred to and submitted herewith, together with the preamble and resolutions adopted at the regular session held September 21, 1905, and such further action as may be taken by this Conference in relation hereto, be printed in pamphlet form for such general distribution as may be deemed advisable, in order that the opportunity and necessities of the situation may be brought to the attention of the official, representative, and other leading men of the Church at large. We further recommend that the Baltimore Conference, at its annual session soon to convene, be requested to indorse the movement, and to memorialize the General Conference, to meet in May next, in that behalf, in the manner suggested in paragraph number 2 of the resolutions of September 21, 1905, aforesaid.

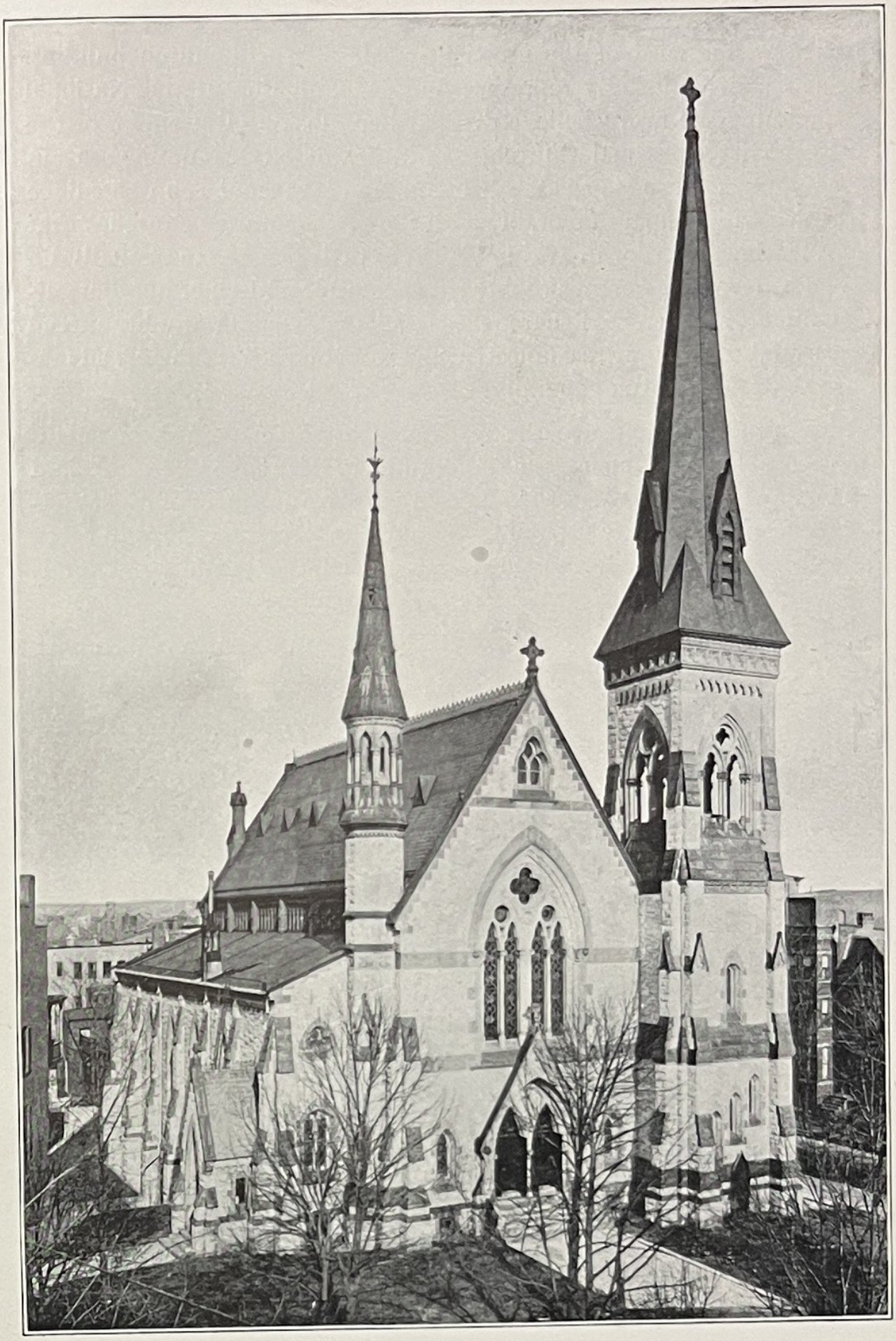
Respectfully submitted.

WM. FRENCH LOCKE.
ARTHUR B. PUGH.
FREDERICK A. STIER.
W. L. CHAMBERS.
J. EVERETT BAIRD.
JOHN M. FOLLIN.
DAVID L. COON.

Thereupon the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

The committee appointed under the preamble and resolutions adopted at the regular session of this Conference, held September 21, 1905, having submitted their report, and the same having been carefully considered, be it therefore

Resolved: 1, That we indorse and approve the said report as setting forth with substantial accuracy the history and work of Southern Methodism in this city, the progress which has been made notwithstanding the discouraging conditions under which the Church labored for many years after the civil war, and the opportunity now afforded for larger and greater evangelistic effort and development. We especially indorse and approve the presentation in said report of



XV. CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, TWELFTH STREET AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE N. W.

the pressing need of the erection in this city of a church building such as will fittingly represent our denomination at the National Capital. We firmly believe that further substantial progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in this city cannot be reasonably expected so long as the denomination is without a church edifice which will compare favorably with the representative churches that other denominations have provided for their people, and equally do we believe that were a suitably representative church of our denomination to be erected here the resultant benefits would extend throughout our entire connection and would be of inestimable advantage to the Church generally.

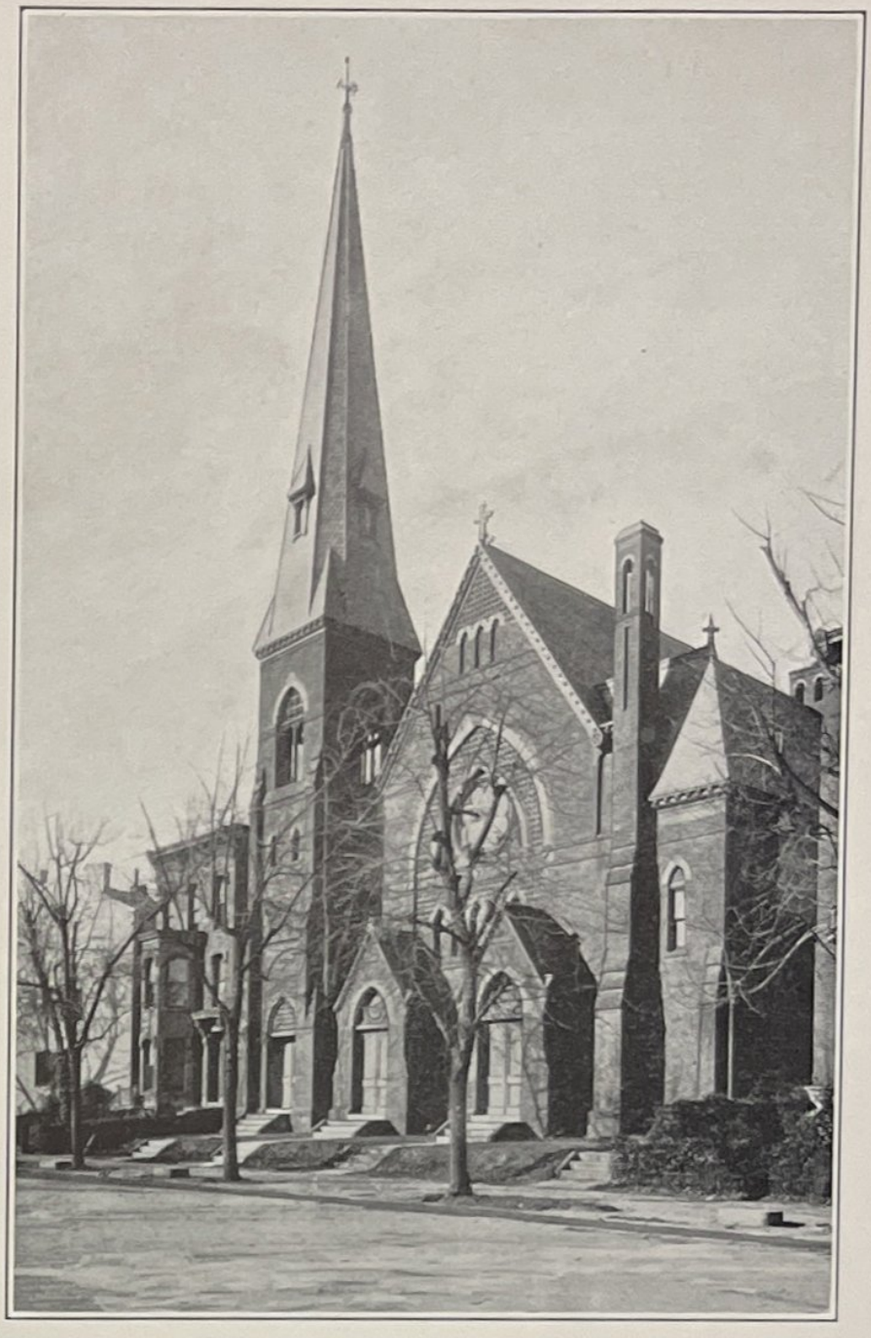
2. That we approve the recommendations contained in subdivision II of said report, and the Presiding Elder is hereby authorized to appoint a committee of not less than five members of this Conference, whose duty it shall be to take the necessary steps to carry into effect the said recommendations, and the Presiding Elder is hereby constituted a member of said committee.

3. That we hereby adopt the said report in its entirety as a part of these resolutions.

The persons who with the Presiding Elder constitute the committee authorized by the resolutions were appointed as follows:

Arthur B. Pugh,
Frederick A. Stier,
J. Everett Baird,
David L. Coon,
Wm. French Locke,
Wm. L. Chambers,
W. W. Millan,
John M. Follin,

Dr. H. R. Moore.



XVI. VERMONT AVENUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH